My submission for January and February:

We’ve been creating keynotes in science, photography, and Latin classes, writing papers in various classes, taking notes in all classes, and writing current events papers for economics class. The skill students seem to find most difficult is note taking. So, in English and economics classes, we’ve been learning and practicing two-column note taking and coding. (If any of you want a copy of the two-column note taking form I use, email me and I’ll put a copy in your mailbox; it’s not electronic.)

To teach the skill I first model. I select an article pertinent to the class content, read it out loud while coding and writing down key words, main ideas, or quotations with page numbers. After completing the left hand column, I go to the right hand column and write down the important ideas or notes to go with each entry in the left hand column. Any ? as I code, I research to find the answer. Discussion follows.

Next, we do an article together. After several practice articles, students do some on their own. Discussion follows each article.

Today, I gave the students an article from PubMed Health and we did a modified think-pair-share. All received the same article. Each student had a different topic within the article and had to write a list of key words or main ideas. I then paired them up to “put two sets of eyes” on each list, with instructions to edit to key words or main ideas. One student reminded the class that a key word or main idea should not be a complete sentence.

Each student then presented his/her list. Only one student did not use complete sentences. One copied directly from the text. HELP!!! (We did discuss plagiarism.)

Student feedback is mostly positive. While they groan, most say this method is helping with comprehension and taking notes, and they feel “like I’m actually learning something.” Another comment was “this is weird, not writing a real sentence.”

The sources I’ve used for articles are: The Economic Times, Lewiston Sun Journal, Associated Press, NY Times, National Institute of Health (PubMed Health).